

8 ESSENTIAL POSES TO DO AT EVERY AGE

yoga

JOURNAL

16 POSES TO FIND CALM IN A BUSY LIFE

HOW YOGA
KEEPS
YOU YOUNG

5 moves to feel
refreshed
and renewed

7 TIPS FOR
INNER
HAPPINESS

STAY WELL
this cold season



Nov 2012 | Display until Nov 20, 2012

\$5.99 US/\$6.99 CAN

11 >



8

YOGAJOURNAL.COM



7 ways to find calm amid chaos

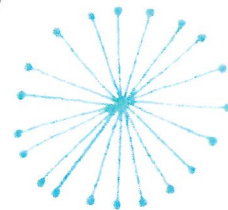
Try these ideas for reconnecting with yourself, which we find is the key to staying happy in stressful times.

Around the holidays, life has a way of spinning out of control. Work and family duties multiply and compete until every day feels like a race to get things done. Your practice gets postponed—for a day or two and then indefinitely—because your schedule is so packed, you just don't have time.

But you *do*. In roughly the same amount of time it takes to check Facebook or play a few games of iPhone solitaire, you can pause to reconnect with yourself—and you can do it many times each day, even on the busiest days. The result? A quieter and calmer you.

Try these seven simple ways to reset. Some take only a few seconds, and none takes more than 15 minutes. But in every case, the very act of taking time to stop and nurture yourself is as important as the practice you choose to explore.

by HILLARI DOWDLE
illustrations by TRACY WALKER



1

START YOUR DAY BRIGHT

Adopting a morning ritual that allows you to celebrate yesterday's successes and set a positive intention for the day can make the difference between feeling happy and feeling harassed. "I have found that if I don't do my ritual first thing in the morning, my day consumes me," says Boulder, Colorado, yoga teacher Amy Ippoliti. "If I do it, I remember that the point is to love my life. I can approach the day and its stresses with a positive attitude."

Sit on a meditation cushion or a sofa or even at the kitchen table. You'll need a pen and two notebooks and maybe a deck of inspiring cards, such as an oracle deck. (There are many such decks on the market; Ippoliti uses *The Answer Is Simple Oracle Cards*, by Sonia Choquette, and *The Life Lift-Off Cards*, by Michael Bernard Beckwith.)

"First, be still for a minute or two and imagine breathing through your heart," Ippoliti instructs. "With every inhalation, call to mind something that you are deeply appreciative of. It could be anything—your cat, your car, your job, your family."

After a few breaths, take your gratitude journal, and jot down what came to mind. Then open your success journal, and write down your latest accomplishment. "Any little win you can think of," Ippoliti says.

If you are using inspiration cards, close your eyes and draw one. You're not looking for divination but inspiration. Prop the card in front of you, and take in the image and the message.

Finally, close with a few minutes of meditation. "I do some Ujjayi Pranayama [Victorious Breath]," Ippoliti says. "I think about the kind of day I want to have and allow my mind to resonate with my goals."





CRACK A SMILE

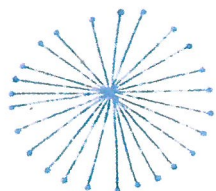
Most of us think of asanas as poses that involve the precise placement of limbs, spine, head, and torso. We don't think so much about our faces or practicing the simple exercise that can be highly effective off the mat: the smile.

"Smiling is one of the most powerful things you can do for personal transformation," says Mirka Kraftsow, a cofounder of

the American Viniyoga Institute. "Choose to smile and bring the same awareness to your smile that you would bring to any other pose. Even if you're not feeling particularly happy, this practice will pick you up because the brain doesn't know the difference between a spontaneous smile and an intentional one." Backing up Kraftsow's notion are several psychological studies citing an expression-emotion feedback

loop that produces feelings of calm and pleasure when triggered by a smile.

"It's a beautiful practice, and you can taste the fruit it produces right away," Kraftsow says. "You'll begin to cultivate friendliness toward everyone around you. You might even get a smile in return. You'll also begin to notice all the sources of happiness that surround you, even on your worst days."



SURRENDER YOUR CARES

At any point in the day when things feel overwhelming or insurmountable, try practicing this simple vinyasa taught by A.G. Mohan, a longtime student of Krishnamacharya and the author of *Yoga for Body, Breath, and Mind*. It can shift your perspective and give you a new place of calm from which to meet life's demands.

Start standing up straight in Tadasana (Mountain Pose), with hands in prayer position over the chest. As you inhale, raise your arms overhead into Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute), silently chanting *Om* as you move. As you exhale, bring your hands to the earth in Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend), silently chanting *Namaha*. Repeat this movement and message 10 times, making sure to breathe deeply throughout the exercise.

"When you chant *Om*, imagine connecting with your highest Self and your ability to face any challenge or solve any problem," Mohan explains. "When you chant *Namaha*, allow yourself to surrender to a higher power, realizing that it's not up to you to take care of everything." When you're done, take a moment to commit to being fully present for whatever life dishes up next.



BREW SOME BLISS

In contrast to the high-octane coffee break, a cup of freshly brewed tea offers a mellow pick-me-up enhanced by reflection and health benefits. The Kundalini Yoga tradition offers a ritual for mindfully brewing a bracing cup of spiced black tea that begins before you gather your ingredients.

"When you approach the task with focused attention, it is good for concentration, memory, and mood," says Dharma Singh Khalsa, MD, a neuroscientist and the author of *Food as Medicine* and *The New Golden Rules*. "It's a meditation in motion."

Khalsa offers a simple recipe: Put four black peppercorns; four whole green cardamom pods; a half-inch slice of fresh ginger; half a cinnamon stick; and three whole cloves in a pot filled with 10 ounces (a little over a cup) of water. Smell each ingredient as you add it to the water. "Each one is

healing," Khalsa says. "Black pepper purifies the blood; cardamom and ginger promote digestion; cinnamon supports bone health; cloves calm the nervous system."

Boil the mixture for 10 minutes. Add a half cup of almond, soy, or cow's milk along with one bag of black tea, and steep for five minutes. Rest and reflect while the mixture brews. Take a moment to enjoy the aroma, and meditate on your breath or a simple mantra such as *Sat nam*, which means "truth is my identity."

"Remind yourself that you are a spiritual being having a human experience, not an animal struggling with life," Khalsa says. "That way you can transform your stress into bliss." When the hot tea is ready, sit and enjoy drinking it with your full attention.



GROOVE TO THE MUSIC

The pace of modern life can leave you feeling exhausted and depleted. Frank Lipman, an integrative physician and the founder of New York City's Eleven Eleven Wellness Center, understands this. He is the author of such books as *Total Renewal* and, most recently, *Revive*. Stress relief is a key to wellness, he says, and it can be as easy as taking a break and listening to some music.

"Music is medicine," he says. "I prescribe it all the time."

Your body responds to the rhythms of your environment, Lipman explains. That's a good thing if you live at the beach, but it can work against you if you're in the city and are surrounded by a cacophony of sirens, screeches, and honks. "Internal and external rhythms are linked," he continues. "They are, in fact, inseparable."

To get your rhythm on an even keel, put on some music that plays at about 60 beats per minute. (Lipman suggests Bob Marley.) "Close your eyes, stay very conscious of your listening, and the music will begin to affect the rhythms of your bodily processes," he says. Expect your breathing to slow, your heart rate to come down, and a sense of calm to take hold as you supplant your environment's unsettling rhythms with those of the music. Find Lipman's own calming playlists at drfranklipman.com.



6

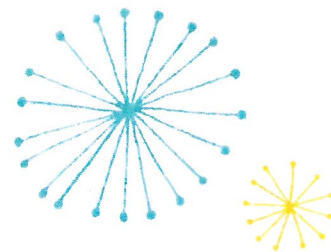
LET THE WORLD IN

To reap the benefits of meditation—improved health, better focus, inner calm—you don't have to confine yourself to a rigid 5 a.m. date with your meditation cushion, says Vasant Lad, founder of the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the author of *Ayurveda*, a seminal reference for Westerners. Instead, head outdoors for a walking break with your senses set to receive.

"Pay attention to anything the ears are hearing," Lad suggests. "Listen completely—the barking of a dog, the rattle of a truck, the wind in the leaves, the cry of a child. Allow these sights and sounds to penetrate you, and you'll begin to experience true inner peace and silence."

Next, take time to focus on the details of what you are seeing. "Notice the play of light on the leaves of a tree, the shadow of the houses and electric poles, the subtle movements of the flowers and grass," Lad says. "Don't like or dislike anything you see; rather sense your connection to the world around you, and let any sense of loneliness evaporate."

This walking practice should help you to completely reframe your day, Lad says, and begin to connect you with your surroundings in the most positive and beneficial way. "In simply looking and listening—without any judgment—there naturally arises a sense that life is beautiful," he says. "A morning walk unfolds healing energy in the heart."



7

KISS YOURSELF GOODNIGHT

A short, soothing routine at bedtime can signal to your body and mind that it's time to let go of the day and rest. Renée Loux, yogi, organic chef, spa consultant, and the author of *Easy Green Living*, suggests giving yourself a nightly facial massage with a homemade blend of organic oils to end your day on a nurturing note.

Add two drops each of lavender, chamomile, and rose essential oils to two ounces of almond oil. Shake gently, and put six or eight drops in your palm. As you rub your hands together to warm the mixture, breathe in the relaxing scent.

Apply the oil to your neck and face using gentle upward strokes. Then use your thumbs to draw the skin on your cheeks and forehead up toward the hairline. Working from the inside of the eyes outward, pinch along the eyebrow. "Use a little strength," Loux says. "It helps release the tension stuck here."

Next, use your thumb and forefinger to gently pull apart any visible facial lines, especially on the forehead, at the bridge of the nose, and around the mouth. Starting at the inner corners of the eyes, press the fingertips along the ridge under the eyes. Pinch your cheeks lightly, and finish the routine with a few circular full-facial strokes, using the flat of the palms or the length of the fingers. Place the palms over the eyes for a few seconds. Then finish getting ready for bed.

Do this for 15 minutes, or for 5, if that's all you've got. But do it every evening. Says Loux, "There is something profoundly healing about making the commitment to show up every day for your own self-care." ❖

Contributing editor and yogini Hillari Dowdle lives, writes, and seeks daily moments of calm in Knoxville, Tennessee.

